



**HOUSE ARMED SERVICES SUBCOMMITTEE ON READINESS
JOEL HEFLEY, COLORADO – CHAIRMAN**

PRESS RELEASE

For Immediate Release: March 8, 2006

Contact: Josh Holly, HASC (202) 225-2539 or
Kim Sears (Hefley) (202) 225-4422

**Chairman Hefley Opening Statement for Hearing on the Department
of Defense’s Management of Historic Facilities**

Washington, DC --- Today, the Readiness Subcommittee meets to hear testimony from the Department of Defense on the management of its historic facilities.

Historic property management is a challenging task for the Department. Not only is DOD responsible for managing tens of thousands of historic properties ranging from hangars to houses and barracks to bunkers, but their properties are often greatly appreciated by local historians.

While the Department has a responsibility to identify and preserve its historic facilities under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, for many properties, the price of doing so is becoming a difficult one to bear.

Over the past year, I have personally walked through the historic homes of the Army Chief of Staff, the Air Force Chief of Staff, the Chief of Naval Operations, and the Superintendent of West Point. I have seen the tremendous amount of work that needs to go into these facilities to repair and upgrade them to modern standards.

And, in many cases, I simply cannot imagine the day that Congress will provide the amount of money necessary to fund all of the necessary repairs.

For example:

- Late last year, the Army requested authority to spend more than \$1 million to repair the roof at the Superintendent’s home at West Point, New York. According to the Army, this home may require an additional \$6 million in repairs, even after the roof structures are fixed.
- Also last year, the Navy requested authority to spend more than \$300,000 to study a mold problem at an historic house at the Navy Yard, Washington, D.C. According to the

Navy, complete repairs to this unit are likely to cost between \$2.6 million and \$5.2 million.

- And most recently, the Navy submitted a request to spend over \$5 million for historic remediation at Naval Air Station Pensacola, Florida in order to meet the terms of a negotiated settlement between the State Historic Preservation Office, the Navy, and the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation.

While preserving our nation's history is important, the federal government does not have unlimited resources, so it is essential that we strike a balance between historic interests, common sense, and fiscal reason.

As much as we might want to keep and repair certain historic houses, our nation simply cannot afford to spend millions of dollars on any one house. We must find other ways to fund those needs, reduce costs, or transfer the asset to someone who can afford it.

I have spent a large portion of my time in Congress working on DOD's facility budgets. I am well aware of the Department's annual failure to fully fund and execute sustainment and base operations budgets. I have seen the leaking barracks, substandard child development centers, and failing family housing units that result from underfunding.

Readiness budgets alike are under extraordinary pressures – training, body armor, weapons, vehicles, and daily operations all cost great amounts of money. Failure to fund these requirements costs readiness – a price that can be paid with the lives of our service members.

So it is in this context that we must consider the relative merits of spending millions of dollars to repair any single housing unit.

Unfortunately, there are no simple solutions – we cannot and should not tear down every expensive historic structure; we cannot simply give every historic facility away without compromising the security of our installations; and we cannot afford the massive sums necessary to support all of our historic structures.

In my opinion, the solution is likely a combination of the following. First, DOD should take a more aggressive approach of preservation for those facilities that are truly historic and demolition of those that are not. Second, DOD and Congress must do some thinking outside of the box to find ways to reduce costs associated with preservation. And third, DOD must more frequently employ adaptive reuse, enhanced use leasing, and other authorities to maximize the value of any given historic structure.

###

<http://www.house.gov/hasc/>